

**We Claim:**

1. A method of handling a resource request, comprising:  
 receiving a resource request at a network server from a client, the  
 5 resource request comprising a first identity of a network entity;  
     searching a database for a resource record associated with a best  
 instance of the network entity; the best instance of the network entity being  
 defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the  
 resource request;  
 10      retrieving an identifier of a series of executable instructions from the  
 resource record; and  
     executing the series of instructions to facilitate providing the  
 requested resource to the client by the best instance of the network entity.
- 15 2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the resource request further  
 comprises information relating to an operational characteristic, and the best  
 instance of the network entity is defined by the instance of the network entity  
 that is most compatible with the operational characteristic.
- 20 3. A method according to Claim 2, wherein executing the series of  
 instructions further comprises:  
     analysing a set of network entities;  
     determining the network entities compatible with the resource request  
 on the basis of the operational characteristic; and  
 25      returning a response comprising an ordered list of compatible network  
 entities, with the best instance of network entity first.
4. A method according to Claim 3, wherein the response further comprises  
 information relating to the operational characteristics of the network entities.

5. A method according to Claim 2 further comprising: adding the information relating to the operational characteristic to the resource request after receiving said resource request at the network server from the client.

5 6. A method according to Claim 2, wherein the steps of receiving and searching take place at a global network server.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the network server is a DNS server and the step of receiving a resource request comprises receiving a request concerning access to the network entity.

8. A method according to Claim 7, further comprising:  
converting the resource request at the DNS server into a form operable by the global network server; and  
15 transmitting the converted resource request to the global network server prior to the steps of searching and retrieving.

9. A method according to Claim 8, wherein the step of retrieving an identifier is implemented at the global network server.

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10. A method according to Claim 9, wherein the requested resource is provided to the client by the best instance of the network entity via the network server.

25 11. A method according to Claim 8, wherein the steps of searching a database and retrieving an identifier are implemented on a content server associated with the global server.

12. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the network entity is an application.

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13. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the network entity is a server operating an application.

14. A method of handling a resource request, comprising:

5 receiving a resource request concerning access to a network entity from a client, said resource request comprising a first identity of the network entity and information relating to an operational characteristic;

10 searching a database for a resource record associated with a best instance of the network entity, the best instance of the network entity being defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the operational characteristic;

retrieving an identifier of a series of executable instructions from the resource record; and

15 executing the series of instructions to facilitate providing the requested resource to the client by the best instance of the network entity.

15. A method according to Claim 14, wherein the step of executing the series of instructions to facilitate providing the requested resource further comprises:

20 finding compatible network entities able to provide the requested resource;

comparing the information relating to the operational characteristic with corresponding operational characteristics of compatible network entities; and

25 returning a response comprising an ordered list of network entities together with their corresponding operational characteristics, the best instance of network entity being placed first.

16. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the steps of receiving and  
30 searching take place at a global network server.

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17. A method according to Claim 16, wherein the network server is a DNS server and the step of receiving a resource request comprises receiving a request concerning access to the network entity.

- 5 18. A method according to Claim 17, further comprising:  
converting the resource request at the DNS server in to a form  
operable by the global network server; and  
transmitting the converted resource request to the global network  
server prior to the steps of searching and retrieving.

- 10 19. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the resource request is a  
DNS record and the operational characteristic is contained within an  
additional DNS text field forming part of the DNS record.

- 15 20. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the response is a DNS  
record and the operational characteristics of the compatible network entities  
are contained within an additional DNS text field forming part of the DNS  
record.

- 20 21. A method according to Claim 14, further comprising identifying a  
lookup means for accessing said network entity.

22. A method according to claim 21 wherein the look up means comprises  
an address.

- 25 23. A method according to Claim 21 wherein the identifying comprises  
retrieving a second identity of the network entity.

- 30 24. A method according to claim 23 wherein the first identity comprises a  
name and the second identity comprises an address.

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25. A DNS record for conveying a response, comprising a user-defined text-field for specifying Content Selection Criteria for finding a best instance of a network entity for providing a requested resource; the best instance of the network entity being defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the requested resource.

26. A DNS record for conveying a resource request, comprising an user-defined text-field for specifying at least one operational characteristic of a client for finding network entities compatible with the requested resource on the basis of operational characteristics.

27. A scalable architecture for handling a resource request from a client, the resource request comprising a first identity of a network entity, the architecture comprising:

15 a network server for providing the requested resource to the client by a best instance of the network entity in response to receiving the resource request from the client, said best instance of the network entity being defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the resource request with respect to Content Selection Criteria.

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28. An architecture according to claim 22, wherein the resource request further comprises information relating to an operational characteristic, and the best instance of the network entity is defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the operational characteristic; the architecture further comprising:

25 a global network server for returning a set of network entities in response to receiving a converted resource request form the network server;

the network server further comprising a comparator for comparing the returned network entities with information relating to the operational characteristic to produce an ordered list of network entities with the best instance of the network entity first.

29. An architecture according to claim 28, further comprising a content manager associated with the global network server and holding information on networks entities, said content manager configured for providing information on all known network entities able to supply the requested resource on receiving a query corresponding to the conventional resource request from the global network manager.

30. A computer readable storage medium storing instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a method for handling a resource request, the method comprising;

receiving a resource request at a network server from a client, said resource request comprising a first identity of a network entity;

searching a database for a resource record associated with a best instance of said network entity; said best instance of the network entity being defined by the instance of the network entity that is most compatible with the resource request;

retrieving an identifier of a series of executable instructions from said resource record; and

executing said series of instructions to facilitate providing the requested resource to said client by said best instance of the network entity.

31. A method according to Claim 2, wherein the operational characteristic is one of: a response time of said network entity, a load on said network entity, a distance to the network entity, and a throughput of the network entity.

32. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the requested resource is available on the network entity but is not available on the network server.

33. A communications network comprising the scaleable architecture as claimed in claim 27.